

## **Program Significantly Delays Teen Sex**

### **Issue:**

Many times adolescent sexual activity results in unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease (STD) infections. The costs associated with these consequences are staggering. *The National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy* reports that each year the federal government alone spends \$40 billion to help families that begin with a teenage birth. The *American Social Health Association* reports about half of all new STDs in 2000 occurred among youth ages 15 to 24 and estimated the total costs of these STDs to be \$6.5 billion.

The cost burdens of adolescent sexual activity are so great that even small reductions in incidences of teen pregnancies and STD infections could lead to considerable savings.

Recently, the Institute for Research & Evaluation completed an assessment of Heritage Community Services' (Heritage's) character-based abstinence education program. During the first week of November 2005, they presented their findings at two national conferences. Their presentations noted that, 12 months after completing the program, Heritage students were about half as likely as other students to initiate sex. Their assessment concluded "...the Heritage program produced a significant and substantial delay in sexual initiation 12 months after the intervention..."

### **Intervention:**

Heritage Community Services developed 'The Heritage Method®' to increase the numbers of adolescents refraining from non-marital sexual activity.

- The Heritage Method® complies with the US Congress' definition of abstinence education, as well as the South Carolina Comprehensive Health Education Act.
- The Heritage Method® has two school-based components (*Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education I & II* and *Heritage Keepers Life Skills Education, Levels I – V*) and four community-based components (*Parent, Faith, Media* and *Family Assets and Character Councils*).
- The Heritage Method® serves high schools, middle schools, and the communities around the schools.
- The Heritage Method® reaches adolescents and the adults who influence them.

### **Impact:**

- The Heritage Method® reaches more than 20,000 teens yearly in South Carolina, Georgia, Maine, Rhode Island, Kentucky, and the Caribbean with the message that marriage is the best place for sex.
- In 2002, the Institute for Research & Evaluation compared Heritage's students to similar non-program students a year after program completion and found that their program reduced the proportion of adolescents initiating sexual activity by 41% among those receiving the program for the first time and 72% among those receiving the program a second time.

### **Contact:**

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